

REMARKS

Claims 1-12 are pending in the present application with claims 1-6 withdrawn in response to a restriction requirement. With entry of this Amendment, Applicant cancels claim 7 without prejudice and amends claims 8-11. Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thompson et al. (US 6014817) in view of EPO 330886, Lin et al. (US 6360132 B2) or Fairbairn et al. (US 6176667 B1). Applicant notes with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter with respect to claims 8-12, which depend from claim 7.

Applicant has canceled rejected claim 7 without prejudice and placed claims 8-11 in independent form. In placing claims 8-10 in independent form, Applicant notes that claim 7 recited checking the processing sequence of the object to be processed afterwards in order "to choose one or more of the plurality of the processing units" for the object to be processed first. Because claims 8-10 define how the processing units for the object to be processed first are chosen, claims 8-10 do not reiterate the above recitation of claim 7. Applicant respectfully submits that claims 8-10, as amended, are in condition for allowance. Applicant also respectfully submits that claim 11 and claim 12, which depends from claim 11, are also in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

If, for any reason, the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, Applicant requests that the Examiner contact the undersigned attorney at the Los Angeles telephone number (213) 892-5630 to discuss any steps necessary to place the application in condition for allowance.

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing docket no. 199372003400.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

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